

American Policy towards Japan's "Unconditional Surrender"

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EVER SINCE President Franklin D. Roosevelt announced in 1943 his determination to gain the "unconditional surrender" of the major Axis powers, the decision has been surrounded with controversy. Fierce debate on the wisdom of the policy began almost immediately and has continued periodically since World War II ended. It remains doubtful, however, whether an entirely convincing account of the concept and origins of "unconditional surrender" and its application to Germany and Japan has yet been attempted.¹

This article is an attempt to reconstruct the origins and evolution of the "unconditional surrender" policy, making use of primary sources recently made available and taking advantage of a historian's hindsight thirty-five years after the end of the war.

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¹ Two monographs concentrating on this subject are: Anne Armstrong, *Unconditional Surrender: The Impact of the Casablanca Policy upon World War II* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1961), and Raymond G. O'Connor, *Diplomacy for Victory: FDR and Unconditional Surrender* (New York, 1971). Also see Brian L. Villa's challenging article, "The U.S. Army, Unconditional Surrender, and the Potsdam Proclamation," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 62, no. 1 (1976), which stressed the importance of General Marshall's office in formulating unconditional surrender policy for Japan.

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I

POSTWAR PLANNING BY THE UNITED STATES

During World War II the State Department assumed a major responsibility for postwar planning within the United States government. Given the fact that peace conferences were traditionally the highlights of diplomatic activities, one might assume that preparations for peace are left in the hands of the diplomatic establishment of a nation. Such was certainly not the case, however, at the time of World War I.

Under President Woodrow Wilson, Secretary of State Robert Lansing was deprived of virtually all the responsibility for both important wartime diplomacy and postwar planning. Instead, Colonel Edward M. House was given the main role in these tasks. House brought together over one hundred specialists to form an organization called the "Inquiry." This group took part in drafting Wilson's "Fourteen Points" speech, and also studied various issues in postwar planning, producing a number of working papers for the Paris Peace Conference known as the "Black Book" and the "Red Book." Whereas thirteen State Department officials went to Paris as members of the American delegation, nineteen from the "Inquiry" were included in the delegation.²

However, even the "Inquiry" group could not make a satisfactory contribution in Paris. In the face of the almost hopeless difficulties, they became acutely aware of the inadequacies of their preparations and finally suffered from frustrations and disappointments. The point is, however, that for the State Department World War I was an even more frustrating experience. Admittedly, in the American system of government "[t]he extent to which the Secretary of State is in the driver's seat usually depends on the temperament of the Chief Executive."³ It was nevertheless very discouraging for the State Department to be removed from the "driver's seat" of foreign policy at the most important moment.

There was no guarantee that the same thing would not happen in World War II. In fact, Cordell Hull was a much stronger Secretary of State than Lansing and tried to ensure that his authority would not be compromised. Lansing agreed to become Secretary of State in 1915,

² Lawrence E. Gelfand, *The Inquiry: American Preparations for Peace, 1917-1919* (New Haven, 1963), pp. 25-29, 39-46, 161-63, 318-26.

³ Thomas A. Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People*, 9th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1974), p. 8.

when President Wilson made it clear that Lansing would not have to exert any political influence, and that he was expected only to give the President technical advice concerning diplomatic papers and international law. Hull, on the other hand, mulled over Franklin D. Roosevelt's offer for thirty days, and finally accepted the appointment after having received a promise that he would be given substantial authority over the formation and implementation of foreign policy.⁴ Throughout his twenty-five years in Congress, Hull had cultivated friendships and alliances with other legislators, and built for himself a strong base of influence, especially among his Southern colleagues. Hull's political influence was an important factor in the nomination of Roosevelt as the Democratic Presidential candidate in 1932 and Hull's support was continuously needed thereafter. One of Roosevelt's tactical idiosyncrasies was to avoid giving complete authority over matters to a single subordinate, but to counterbalance him by someone else and let them compete under Roosevelt's own supervision. There were occasions when his use of this technique seriously hurt Hull's feelings, but during the eight years of his first two terms, which constituted the normal tenure of office, Roosevelt generally gave Hull the "driver's seat" in foreign policy.

The approaching shadow of World War II changed this relationship: Roosevelt and Hull began to resemble Wilson and Lansing. In general a crisis strengthens the position of a President. Elected for the third term in the fall of 1940 without relying on Hull's political influence, Roosevelt assumed personal control of wartime diplomacy as the single powerful leader of the American people. His "Arsenal of Democracy" speech in December of that year and the enactment of the Lend-Lease Act in March 1941 symbolized the takeover of major wartime diplomacy by the White House from the Department of State. During the spring and summer of that year the President's personal envoy, Harry Hopkins, flew back and forth between London, Moscow, and Washington, paving the way for the "Grand Alliance." As for the line of communications linking the top leaders of the United States and Great Britain, the military channels used by Hopkins and Averell Harriman, who was sent to London by the President, became more important than those of the State Department. What were left to Hull were Latin American affairs,

⁴ Frank Freidel, *FDR: Launching the New Deal* (Boston, 1973), pp. 144-46; Julius Pratt, *Cordell Hull*, Vol. 1 (New York, 1964), pp. 9-11; Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull* (hereafter cited as *Hull Memoirs*), Vol. 1 (New York, 1948), pp. 270-80.

the endless, constantly deadlocked negotiations with Japan prior to Pearl Harbor, and inordinately increasing day-to-day business. It sometimes happened that copies of the most important wartime diplomatic papers were sent from Hopkins to Hull on an *ex post facto* basis.⁵

Hull gave careful attention to the minutiae of procedures and practices within the bureaucracy; even when situations required a new proposal, he had a tendency to write the worst-case scenario before considering the proposal's feasibility. In Roosevelt's view, Hull was unsuited to conducting diplomacy in an exacting period which required imagination in planning and boldness in action.⁶

Postwar planning became the last "lifeline," so to speak, for the State Department, which had been seeing its leadership in conducting diplomacy slipping out of its hands. As the chairman of the Democratic National Committee after World War I, Hull had frequently called on the disillusioned Wilson for lectures and guidance on international affairs. He absorbed the Wilsonian vision of a new world order and became convinced that free trade, in particular, would provide a basis for peace and justice in international relations. When war broke out in Europe in September 1939, Hull immediately set about preparing for a new postwar world and for that purpose created in the State Department an Advisory Committee on Problems of Foreign Relations. Foreign policy statements based on universalistic principles were his specialty, as it were, and the outbreak of World War II gave him an opportunity to prepare a postwar plan based on those principles.⁷ But Hull's command even in this sphere was not entirely secure by 1941. The announcement of the Atlantic Charter in August should rightfully have been Hull's affair. His poor health might explain the reason why he did not attend the Atlantic Conference, but the remarkable fact is that he was not even consulted on the Charter in advance.⁸

⁵ Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins* (New York, 1950), pp. 268–70. James M. Burns, *Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom* (New York, 1970), pp. 25–26, 60–61.

⁶ John M. Blum, ed., *The Price of Vision: The Diary of Henry A. Wallace, 1942–1946* (Boston, 1973), p. 91; Sherwood, *op. cit.*, p. 757; Fred L. Israel, ed., *The War Diary of Breckinridge Long, 1939–1944* (Lincoln, Nebr., 1966), pp. 387–88; Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (New York, 1969), p. 9. Burns, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

⁷ Pasvolsky Memo, "Intra-departmental Committee on Problems of Peace and Reconstruction," December 12, 1939. "Advisory Committee on Problems of Foreign Relations, January-May 1940," Notter File, RG 59, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (hereinafter referred to as RG 59, N.A.). Harley A. Notter, *Postwar Foreign Policy Preparation: 1939–1945*, Department of State Publication 3580 (Washington, 1949), pp.

It seemed possible that the President might even confiscate his authority for postwar planning and entrust it to an agency outside the State Department. In fact, two agencies headed by individuals close to Roosevelt were already challenging the Department for the initiative in that field. These were Colonel William J. Donovan's Office of Coordination of Information, and the Economic Defense Board headed by Vice-President Henry A. Wallace. A State Department memorandum of September 1, 1941, sounded the warning bell that Donovan's organization was ultimately trying to develop itself into something like the "Inquiry" created under Colonel House.⁹ The State Department, with its *raison d'être* at stake, tried to fight off the challenge posed by Donovan and Wallace. In this infighting the Department was given full support by the Council on Foreign Relations, a private organization based in New York City headed by Norman H. Davis, an old friend of Secretary Hull. Mobilizing all the personal political prestige he could muster, Hull finally took the daring step—unusual for a courteous gentleman—of confronting the President with an open request that the latter recognize the Department's jurisdiction over this issue.¹⁰

Following the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7 and America's entry into the war, Roosevelt approved the formation of a full-scale organ for postwar planning with the Secretary of State as its head. That was a revival of the advisory committee under the new name of the Advisory Committee on Postwar Foreign Policy. Thus, the State Department was saved from the same fate it had experienced at the time of World War I, and retained the initiative for postwar planning.

In 1942 the State Department took forward steps by organizing high-level committees on postwar planning—composed of its own senior officials and leading members of the Council on Foreign Relations. The same year the Special Research Division was expanded by bringing in scholars and specialists from the private sector, including the Council on Foreign Relations, and by the end of 1942 a staff of nearly forty

19–21.

⁸ Hull Memoirs, Vol. 2, pp. 975–76; Theodore A. Wilson, *The First Summit* (Boston, 1969), pp. 198–200; Long Diary, p. 214.

⁹ Memo by Notter and C. E. Rothwell for Pasvolsky, "Post-Defense Studies in the Government as of September 1, 1941," pp. 77–78, RG 59, N.A.; Wallace Diary, pp. 22–23; *Hull Memoirs*, Vol. 2, p. 1631.

¹⁰ Pasvolsky Memo for the Secretary, "Proposal for the Organization of Work for the Formulation of Post-War Foreign Policies," September 12, 1941, RG 59, N.A. Draft letter, Hull to the President, December 5, 1941, RG 59, N.A.; *Hull Memoirs*, Vol. 2, pp. 1361–62.

specialists was set up to conduct round-the-clock research on the postwar world. With the Division acting as the secretariat for the committees, the two groups supported and complemented each other.¹¹

The business of postwar planning was entrusted to the State Department, but it was by no means given a totally free hand. Broadly, research within the Department proceeded in accordance with basic policy instructions from the White House, and the research results constituted input for the President. This kind of interaction occurred most conspicuously in the case of policy formulation with regard to the United Nations.

Whether “instructions from above” by the White House or “operations from below” in the Department of State were more powerful, it may be said, depended on the matter at hand. On issues concerning Germany and in spheres in which the Allies and the American people had strong interest, the President appears to have been dominant. He often made decisions on the basis of his own wishes and/or the consensus reached at the Allied wartime summit conferences. The President lacked special interest or knowledge on matters relating to Japan, however, and regarded them primarily as problems for the future. Consequently, issues related to postwar Japan were left to those in charge of “operations from below.”¹² If “instructions from above” were given concerning Japan, they were given only indirectly. Except for the Allied purposes concerning Japan’s territories, which were stipulated in the Cairo Declaration, Roosevelt made virtually no concrete proposals for the treatment of Japan; it was assumed that the general policy towards enemy nations, which he had laid down with Germany foremost in mind, could suitably be applied to Japan as well.

Some basic points in Roosevelt’s general policy toward the enemies appear in the Atlantic Charter. The Charter declared the hope for world reconstruction based on universalistic Wilsonian principles. Except for Point Five, which outlined a New Deal-type reform of social conditions, and Point Six, which was a response to the “freedom from fear” of the Four Freedoms speech, the Charter’s eight points were almost entirely a continuation of Wilson’s Fourteen Points. Permeating the entire Charter

¹¹ Notter, *op. cit.*, p. 520.

¹² See Iokibe, “Blueprint for Japan: Planning the Occupation,” *Hiroshima hōgaku*, Vol. 4, no. 2 (1980), pp. 152–72 (Originally prepared for the New England Seminar at Harvard University, April 7, 1978). Also see Akira Iriye, “Continuities in U.S.-Japanese Relations, 1941–1949,” Yonosuke Nagai and Iriye, eds., *The Origins of the Cold War in Asia* (New York and Tokyo, 1977), pp. 378–407.

were the principles of self-determination and equality of all peoples, and the “horizontal principle” of the phrase “all states, great or small, victor or vanquished” provided the underlying tone. These declarations may have given some comfort to the potential losers.

However, the egalitarian horizontal principle of the Atlantic Charter was carefully qualified: on the one hand, it expressed concern to preserve the vested interests of the major Allied powers, “with due regard for their existing obligations”; on the other, it stated that the vanquished would enjoy the benefits of equality only “after the final destruction of the Nazi tyranny.” Did the destruction of the enemy imply merely military destruction, or did it signify political destruction and an attending overhaul of the domestic social system? Would the freedom of choice of political system and denial of territorial changes not based on the popular will, as stated outright in the Charter, be applied to the defeated? Would the equal opportunity for both victors and vanquished be limited to economic opportunity or did this term refer to their overall status in postwar international politics?

Such subtle but important points were still unclear in the summer of 1941. President Roosevelt first took up these questions in his statement at Casablanca in January 1943. Briefly, in his conception of postwar relationship between victors and vanquished, the primary criterion for establishing the position of nations was the “vertical” principle, cross-cutting the “horizontal” principle of the Atlantic Charter. He took it for granted to keep control of the postwar world in the hands of the major Allied powers, and he had no intention of giving the enemy nations full membership in the postwar international community. As the “policemen” of the world these powers were exceptions, placed above the “equal nations.” The enemies, ordered to surrender unconditionally, were the other exceptions relegated to sub-equality.

II

ORIGINS OF “UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER”

At the joint press conference with Winston Churchill on January 24, 1943, that marked the close of the Casablanca Conference, Roosevelt articulated the demand for unconditional surrender. He explained it as the “elimination of German, Japanese, and Italian war power” to secure “a reasonable assurance of future world peace”; not the “destruction of

the population of Germany, Italy, or Japan, but . . . the destruction of the philosophies in those countries which are based on conquest and subjugation. . . .”¹³

President Roosevelt spiced his explanation of this new policy element with legend and error:

He said, “We had so much trouble getting those two French generals together that I thought to myself that this was as difficult as arranging the meeting of Grant and Lee and then suddenly the press conference was on, and Winston and I had had no time to prepare for it, and the thought popped into my mind that they called Grant ‘Old Unconditional Surrender’ and the next thing I knew, I had said it.”¹⁴

Roosevelt purposely gave the impression that this statement had been an accidental result of musing, but that was untrue in two ways. First, the idea of unconditional surrender had been prepared within the American government, and Roosevelt was concealing the fact that he had previously consulted Churchill and representatives of the military about it. Second, in no sense had there been an unconditional surrender at the meeting between U.S. Grant and Robert E. Lee.

On May 6, 1942, eight months prior to the Casablanca Conference, the Security Subcommittee of the Advisory Committee on Postwar Foreign Policy, of which Secretary of State Hull was in charge, had reached agreement that “nothing short of unconditional surrender could be accepted in the case of Germany and Japan,” although “it might prove desirable to negotiate an armistice with Italy in order to pull her out of the war.” Norman H. Davis, who was chairman of the Subcommittee, conveyed this conclusion to the President and obtained his agreement.¹⁵ Further, on January 7, 1943, at a joint Chiefs of Staff conference in Washington, Roosevelt referred to the phrase “unconditional surrender.”

At Casablanca, probably at their private luncheon meeting on January 18, Roosevelt attempted to persuade Churchill of its necessity.

¹³ *Public Papers and Addresses of F.D. Roosevelt, 1943* (Vol. 12) (New York, 1950), p. 39; *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Conference at Washington, 1941–42, and Casablanca, 1943* (hereafter cited as *FRUS, Washington & Casablanca*), p. 727.

¹⁴ Sherwood, *op. cit.*, p. 696.

¹⁵ S. Minutes 3 (Minutes of the 3rd Meeting of the Security Subcommittee), May 6, 1942, RG 59, N.A.; Memo, “Consultation with President, Passages in the Minutes of Advisory Committee and Its Subcommittees, 1942–1943,” p. 3, RG 59, N.A. O’Connor, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

Churchill agreed with reluctance. At a meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff at 5 P.M. that day, Churchill himself suggested the new formula but withheld his final consent until it was confirmed by the War Cabinet in London. London's reply arrived on the 21st. In accord with its message Churchill inserted "Italy" into the American draft, which demanded unconditional surrender of Germany and Japan only. At any rate, a clear conclusion can be drawn from this episode that the Allied leaders had planned beforehand to demand unconditional surrender. There was no way of its being construed as "accidental."¹⁶

As a footnote, Roosevelt's quip about the surrender negotiations between Grant and Lee at Appomattox merely referred to a popular tradition. In Honolulu in July 1944, Roosevelt described, in vivid detail, the exchanges between the two generals concerning "unconditional surrender." However, no unconditional surrender took place at Appomattox; rather, on the basis of instructions from President Lincoln, the most liberal surrender terms conceivable were concluded in an atmosphere of sympathy. Ulysses Simpson Grant's popular nickname, "Unconditional Surrender Grant," originated in the unconditional surrender which he had forced upon General Simon B. Buckner at Fort Donelson in 1862.¹⁷

Why, despite the fact that three days earlier he had revised the draft statement with Churchill for the press conference, did Roosevelt make his announcement in the form of a unilateral proposal? There is no evidence which can establish a certain explanation. So we can only speculate. First, it is conceivable that after completion of the draft they agreed, in an informal and unrecorded conversation, to change the statement to what was finally made. Averell Harriman, however, who was with the President in Casablanca interpreted Churchill's displeased and offended look after the press conference to mean that Roosevelt had in fact outmaneuvered him. Assuming that Roosevelt's action had been arbitrary, we can still conceive two possibilities. It is possible that, although he had promised to announce it as a mutual agreement, he

¹⁶ *FRUS, Washington & Casablanca*, pp. 506, 635, 833-35, 837. Elliott Roosevelt, *As I Saw It* (New York 1946), p. 117. It seems to me that Elliott Roosevelt mistakenly recorded the date of this luncheon meeting of the 18th as the 23rd, confusing it with one held on the former date with the same four members (FDR, Churchill, Hopkins, and Elliott).

¹⁷ *Public Papers of FDR, 1944-1945*, p. 210. Ulysses Simpson Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant*, Vol. 2 (New York, 1886), pp. 490-492. Samuel I. Rosenman, *Working with Roosevelt* (New York, 1952), pp. 371-72. Anne Armstrong, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

went ahead and stated it as his own brainstorm. It is also possible that although the two had agreed, after the completion of the draft, not to mention unconditional surrender at the press conference, the President broke the agreement. Harriman held the latter view.¹⁸

In any case, Roosevelt's unilateral announcement of the unconditional surrender formula resulted from different evaluations of the formula by the two leaders. Churchill, fearing it would intensify Germany's resistance, was unenthusiastic. Roosevelt, however, was extremely positive because of its political utility, first as a message of alliance to Stalin, fighting in isolation with the fear of a separate peace between Germany and the two Anglo-Saxon powers, and also a message of total victory to the American people, who were dissatisfied with the Darlan Deal.¹⁹ But Roosevelt's motive in pushing so hard is difficult to explain solely on the level of a political response to the immediate situation. This becomes clear if one probes more deeply into the origins of the idea of unconditional surrender. As mentioned earlier, Davis' Security Subcommittee reached the conclusion at its third meeting that unconditional surrender must be sought. This permits conjecture that someone behind the committee had already prepared the groundwork for the new policy development. In fact, it was originally suggested by the Armaments Group, which was a division within the War and Peace Studies organized by the Council on Foreign Relations, after World War II began.

WAR AND PEACE STUDIES, CFR (1939-45)²⁰

	Meetings	Documents
Steering committee	10	8
Security and Armaments Group	51	172
Economic and Financial Group	64	161
Political Group	52	148
Territorial Group	48	128
Peace Aims Group	34	65
Total	259	682

¹⁸ W. Averell Harriman and Elie Abel, *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin, 1941-1946* (New York, 1975), pp. 188-90.

¹⁹ E. Roosevelt, *op. cit.*, p. 117; *FRUS, Washington & Casablanca*, p. 506. John L. Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947* (New York, 1972), pp. 8-10.

²⁰ CFR, *The War and Peace Studies of the Council on Foreign Relations, 1939-1945* (New York, 1946), pp. 10-11.

As indicated in the chart, the Council on Foreign Relations organized wide-ranging research projects and reported the results to the State Department in 682 different papers. At the early stage of the planning the Council's studies preceded the Department's. In early 1942 when the Department was really mobilized with the establishment of the second Advisory Committee, many prominent Council members—including N.H. Davis, Isaiah Bowman, and Hamilton Fish Armstrong—assumed major posts on the Advisory Committee.²¹ It is clear that the Council exerted considerable influence on the State Department's postwar planning; this was especially true in the case of the Security Subcommittee's work, which was headed by Davis, the Council's president. The unconditional surrender policy was precisely the outcome of this special relationship between the Council and the Department.

The term, "unconditional surrender," had almost been forgotten by policymakers until April 8, 1942, when a paper titled "The Armistice Negotiations, 1918" was presented by Grayson Kirk to the twenty-first meeting of the Armaments Group. In its conclusion Kirk argued:

It is clear that if, instead of an armistice, there had been an *unconditional surrender* including, as implied, a speedy conclusion of a military settlement of the war, recovery might have been expedited, the peace conference would not have had hanging over it the fear of a renewal of hostilities by Germany, and German resentment over military aspects of the settlement might not have been so intense or prolonged.²²

This paper was warmly received. The Group agreed that World War I had taught them a lesson that only "unconditional surrender" could become an acceptable basis for the termination of hostilities. It was also decided to send the paper to the State Department immediately.²³ Davis' Security Subcommittee, which received the paper and designated it Security Subcommittee Document no. 8, did not need more than three

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7. CFR, *The Council on Foreign Relations: A Record of Twenty-Five Years, 1921–1946* (New York, 1947), pp. 15–23; Notter, *op. cit.*, pp. 19, 56; Laurence H. Shoup, *Shaping of the National Interest: The Council on Foreign Relations, the Department of State, and the Origins of the Postwar World, 1939–1943* (Ph. D. Dissertation, Northwestern University, 1974), pp. 128, 270.

²² A-B 50 (Armament Group Document No. 50), "The Armistice Negotiations, 1918," Memo by Grayson Kirk, April 8, 1942, Council on Foreign Relations Records, CFR Library, New York. (Emphasis added.)

²³ A-A 21 (Armament Group, Digest of Discussion for the 21st Meeting), April 8, 1942, CFR Records.

meetings to agree on the same conclusion that the Council's Group had reached only after having met twenty-one times.²⁴

Kirk's research on the World War I armistice was inspired by General Tasker H. Bliss' demand for "complete surrender" and General John J. Pershing's demand for "unconditional surrender," both of which were rejected at the time of World War I. These two outstanding American generals, while in Europe, believed that the only way to prevent resumption of fighting by Germany was total disarmament and demobilization. Pershing's old memorandum was resuscitated in the Security Subcommittee and his recommendation strongly impressed government planners:²⁵

It was pointed out that many of the difficulties which arose at the Versailles Conference grew out of the fact that the armistice terms desired by the military commanders in the field were not adopted. . . . The Armistice terms recommended by Generals Pershing and Bliss in October 1918 were cited as an example of a sound armistice proposal.²⁶

At the time of World War I demands for complete victory over the enemy were connected with Republican criticism of President Wilson within the context of American domestic politics. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge spoke eloquently in Congress in August 1918, stating:

It cannot be a peace of bargain, of give and take, and of arrangement. . . . The only peace for us is one that rests on hard physical facts, the peace of *unconditional surrender*. No peace that satisfies Germany in any degree can ever satisfy us. *It cannot be a negotiated peace. It must be a dictated peace.*²⁷

Then, in October, Lodge announced his support for the field commanders' position, emphasizing that the fundamental problem for peace was not the "Fourteen Points" or the "League of Nations," but the destruction of Germany. He stated:

To put Germany where she cannot again break out like an armed lunatic upon the world would do more than any league of peace. . . . *The Republican*

²⁴ S. Minutes 1, April 15, 1942; S. Minutes 3, May 6, 1942, RG 59, N.A.

²⁵ S. Document 8, "The Armistice Negotiations, 1918," April 8, 1942; S. Document 1, "Pershing Brief of October 30, 1918," May 6, 1942, RG 59, N.A. Long Diary, pp. 264-65.

²⁶ S. Minutes 2, April 29, 1942, RG 59, N.A.

²⁷ *Congressional Record*, August 23, 1918, pp. 9394-95. See Arno J. Mayer, *Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking* (New York, 1967), p. 55.

*Party stands for unconditional surrender and complete victory, just as Grant stood.*²⁸

In an attempt to criticize Wilson's internationalist position, Lodge energetically propounded the traditional American view of war—that once war is started, there is no substitute for military victory which ought not be hindered by any political strategem.

At the time of the armistice Roosevelt was Assistant Secretary of the Navy in Washington. He could not play a significant role in shaping the armistice policy, but his position on the issue was rather on the side of Wilson's political enemy, Lodge. Roosevelt insisted on pressing the severest terms on Germany even at the risk of prolonging the war. His terms of surrender for the German navy were that all submarines be unconditionally surrendered immediately, and all other warships be interned in neutral ports.²⁹ Personal experience thus lay behind Roosevelt's prompt agreement during World War II to the Davis committee's recommendations for unconditional surrender. Reflecting on Wilson's failure, Roosevelt acutely felt the danger of a leap toward a new world isolated from domestic politics. This time, Roosevelt was determined not to allow the Republican Party—posed as the defender of the American tradition symbolized by U.S. Grant—to rebel against the Democratic administration. By appropriating Lodge's own words Roosevelt attempted to contain the Republican Party.

Thus, the "unconditional surrender" policy resulted from a widespread sense of chagrin at the resurgence of German militarism and the determination not to repeat the mistake of the past.

III

THE CONCEPT OF UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE POLICY TOWARDS GERMANY

The Meaning of Unconditional Surrender

Given the fact that the argument for unconditional surrender during World War II was not based on any precedent but on a feeling of the missed opportunity, it is natural that the concept lacked concrete

²⁸ *Congressional Record*, October 7, 1918, pp. 11171 (Emphasis added).

²⁹ Kenneth S. Davis, *FDR: The Beckoning of Destiny, 1882–1928* (New York, 1971), pp. 545–46; O'Connor, *op. cit.*, pp. 4–6.

substance. But all the advocates of unconditional surrender shared some idea of what it should be. Stated simply, that was the rejection of armistice, and included two clear demands. First, war should be terminated after the enemy's defeat became undeniably clear. Second, the enemy forces should be disarmed completely.

The American war leaders well remembered the Nazi propaganda that Germany had lost the war not because of military defeat on the battle grounds but because of "a stab in the back" at home. At a press conference in July 1944, Roosevelt stressed the need to defeat the Germans completely so that they could not embark on a military gamble for the third time. "Practically all Germans deny the fact they surrendered in the last war," he said, "but this time they are going to know it."³⁰

The focal point of the arguments by Bliss and Pershing, now resurrected by Kirk, was the physical destruction of all enemy military capabilities. That was the central concern not only for the military men but for all those who feared the possibility of another war.

While the total defeat and demobilization of the enemy may be the two necessary conditions for "surrender," they do not constitute sufficient conditions for "*unconditional* surrender." Why the need for the word "unconditional"? The following quotation from a debate at the Security Subcommittee furnishes a clue:

The question was raised as to the technical difference between an armistice and an unconditional surrender and the answer was made that the first is a negotiated cessation of hostilities, whereas the second is an imposed cessation of hostilities.³¹

Roosevelt himself stated in his first press conference after returning from Casablanca: "... we don't think there should be any kind of negotiated armistice, for obvious reasons. There ought to be an unconditional surrender."³² The fact that they found negotiations with the enemy objectionable and wanted simply to impose a unilateral settlement explains the attachment of the modifier, "unconditional."

Even after the proponents of unconditional surrender had agreed on "unilaterality," there were three positions they could take. The first

³⁰ 962nd Press Conference, Waikiki, Honolulu, July 29, 1944, *Public Papers of FDR, 1944-1945*, p. 210.

³¹ S. Minutes 3, May 6, 1942, RG 59, N.A.

³² 876th Press Conference, February 2, 1943, *Public Papers of FDR, 1943*, p. 60.

position was to reject any negotiation or agreement with the enemy and prohibit even the signing of an instrument of surrender. If, for example, one should literally pursue the meaning of the above statement by Lodge, the only acceptable method would be to fight it out on the battlefield to the point where the enemy's armed forces ceased to exist as an organized body. The second position, although it accepted a surrender instrument, would be to permit agreement concerning only such technical matters as time and method of ceasefire, and to reject any negotiations and agreements on terms regarding the treatment of the vanquished in order to preserve complete freedom for the victor. The third position would be to allow the conclusion of a mutual agreement covering both technical matters and substantive conditions, but the conditions would be dictated unilaterally by the victor with no options available to the defeated; in other words, this position demanded unconditional acceptance of the victor's terms. In this case, no matter how unilateral the actual process might be, negotiations and mutual agreement were permissible, and once the agreement was concluded, the victor would be equally restricted by it.

Which of these three positions corresponded to Roosevelt's definition of unconditional surrender? His earlier words merely rejected "any kind of negotiated 'armistice,'" and significantly he avoided making judgment on the acceptability of a negotiated "surrender." In order to understand the meaning of his "unconditional surrender," let us examine Roosevelt's favorite story (which may not be factual) about the negotiations between Grant and Lee.

There has been a good deal of complaint among some of the nice, high-minded people about unconditional surrender, that if we changed the term "unconditional surrender," Germany might surrender more quickly. . . .

They complain that it is too tough and too rough. I will explain it a little this way.

Back in 1865, Lee was driven into a corner back of Richmond, at Appomattox Court House. His army was practically starving, had had no sleep for two or three days, his arms were practically expended.

So he went, under a flag of truce, to Grant. Lee had come to Grant thinking about his men. He asked Grant for his terms of surrender.

Grant said, "Unconditional surrender."

Lee said he couldn't do that, he had to get some things. Just for example, he had no food for more than one meal for his army.

Grant said, "That is pretty tough."

Lee then said, "My cavalry horses don't belong to us, they belong to our officers and they need them back home."

Grant said, "Unconditional surrender."

Lee then said, "All right. I surrender," and tendered his sword to Grant.

Grant said, "Bob, put it back. Now, do you unconditionally surrender?"

Lee said, "Yes."

Then Grant said, "You are my prisoners now. Do you need food for your men?"

Lee said, "Yes. I haven't got more than enough for one meal more."

Then Grant said, "Now, about those horses that belong to the Confederate officers. Why do you want them?"

Lee said, "We need them for the spring plowing."

Grant said, "Tell your officers to take the animals home and do the spring plowing."

There you have unconditional surrender. I have given you no new term. We are human beings—normal, thinking human beings. That is what we mean by unconditional surrender.³³

The position taken by Grant in this story does not correspond to the first position above, which rejected any type of negotiation and agreement for surrender. Because Grant, the victor, persisted in compelling surrender first without attaching any conditions, his position resembles the second. Yet it does not necessarily reject the third position, insofar as Grant's agreement to give generous consideration to the defeated can be normally treated as part of the surrender terms.

To begin with, the difference between the second position, "the victor's *carte blanche* on terms," and the third, "unconditional acceptance of the victor's terms," is whether or not substantive terms are made explicit at the time of surrender. When the victor's policy is clearly laid out, there would be practically no great difference between the two. It is unlikely that as early as July 1944 Roosevelt chose one position after comparing the two. It is more likely that he simply considered "unconditional acceptance of the victor's terms" essential, and with that in mind he repeatedly stressed unconditional surrender.

Unconditional Surrender of A Nation

One must distinguish between unconditional surrender of armed forces and unconditional surrender of a nation. In contrast to the former, which is a form of ceasefire, the latter concerns the way in which

³³ 962nd Press Conference, *ibid.*, pp. 209–10.

war is terminated between states. Regardless of ancient practices,³⁴ in modern wars a common procedure has been first to halt the fighting by means of an armistice agreement, and then, to end the state of war between nations with political conditions being settled by a peace treaty. This practice has gradually been confirmed by international law. Thus, the term “armistice” was commonly used not only when victory and defeat were not decisive, but also when the result of the war was clear-cut.

As long as it concerned the entire military forces of a nation, no matter how clear victory might have been, the term “armistice” was used, rather than “capitulation” or “surrender,” which were applicable only to the defeat of a fighting unit confined to a certain area. The American government in World War II challenged this usage and sought “unconditional surrender” of the entire military forces of an enemy. Although this itself was a new attempt, their demand for the “unconditional surrender” not only of the military forces, but of the nation itself, was revolutionary.

Quincy Wright, an authority on military history and international law, tried to limit the validity of the term “unconditional surrender” to the military aspect, and insisted on considering it as a means of obtaining political objectives such as those expressed in the Atlantic Charter. He stated:

In the political sense of the term, unconditional surrender would be not only the objective of the war, but also the major objective of the peace. It would assume that the other declarations of the United Nations have been abandoned or subordinated to the political objective of permanently subjugating Germany and Japan to the will of the United Nations.³⁵

³⁴ Hugo Grotius, translated by F. W. Kelsey, *The Law of War and Peace* (New York, 1925), Vol 3., pp. 825–826. Referring to Greek and Roman practices, Grotius points out that as “surrender in fact voluntarily permits what force would otherwise take . . . the victor has the absolute right to decide what he wishes the vanquished to keep, and of what he wishes to deprive them” (p. 699). In particular, “surrender, pure and simple,” that is, unconditional surrender, was intended to “confer the sovereign power on him to whom surrender is made” (p. 825). Still, Grotius stresses that it was virtue and wisdom on the side of the victor to show clemency and generosity to the vanquished.

Also see an article by William M. Franklin, “Unconditional Surrender,” Alexander DeConde, ed., *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy* (New York, 1978), Vol. 3, pp. 968–93.

³⁵ CAC 267 Preliminary, “Japan: Unconditional Surrender,” Memo by Quincy Wright, August 1, 1944, RG 59, N.A.

Roosevelt, however, from the beginning of the Casablanca Conference called for the unconditional surrender of nations, and tried to stretch its connotation to include a wide range of political demands. In his speech to Congress at the beginning of 1943, he stated that for the sake of world peace, Germany, Italy, and Japan “must be disarmed and kept disarmed, and they must abandon the philosophy and the teaching of that philosophy which has brought so much suffering to the world.”³⁶

“Unconditional surrender” was not merely a means of realizing the objective of the Atlantic Charter, nor was it a temporary expedient until the Atlantic Charter was put into effect. It was instituted as a long-term political objective parallel to, and in competition with, the Atlantic Charter. The “horizontal” spirit of the Charter was therefore subject to severe stresses and strains coming from a “vertical” link which connects “big-power control of the world” and “unconditional surrender.” This became clear when the policy of “unconditional surrender” toward Germany was pursued.

Germany's Unconditional Surrender

The Allies' primary political objective vis-à-vis Germany was to secure a free hand in the treatment of the country after the war—allowing Germany no voice in decision-making, so that the victors could proceed unimpeded to fashion the postwar system of their own design. What prompted the Allied powers to impose unconditional surrender was their desire to give themselves unilateral, absolute authority, not only in the disposition of the enemy forces, but also in the treatment of the enemy country as a whole. This point was eloquently argued by Churchill in a speech to the House of Commons in February 1944. Emphasizing the intention not to repeat “mistakes” made after the previous war and clarifying the limits of the Atlantic Charter, he defined unconditional surrender as follows:

The term “unconditional surrender” does not mean that the German people will be enslaved or destroyed. It means however that the Allies will not be bound to them at the moment of surrender by any pact or obligation. There will be, for instance, no question of the Atlantic Charter applying to Germany as a matter of right and barring territorial transferences or adjustments in enemy countries. No such arguments will be admitted by us as

³⁶ Address to the Congress on the State of the Union, January 7, 1943, *Public Papers of FDR, 1943*, p. 33.

were used by Germany after the last war, saying that they surrendered in consequence of President Wilson's "Fourteen Points." Unconditional surrender means that the victors have a free hand If we are bound, we are bound by our own consciences to civilization. . . .³⁷

A conservative politician, Churchill originally did not like the revolutionary formula, "unconditional surrender." In response to a question about the Casablanca Communiqué, he wrote to Robert Sherwood, "I would not myself have used these words, but I immediately stood by the President and have frequently defended the decision."³⁸ In this respect Churchill's position resembled that of Hull, who commented ruefully, "after the President had stated the principle so emphatically at Casablanca, there was nothing we could do except to follow it at least in form. It was to rise on numerous occasions to plague us and to require explanation."³⁹ However, once he had agreed, Churchill, unlike Hull, continuously supported the decision dutifully and explicitly. During the Tehran Conference, however, Stalin leveled sharp criticism at Roosevelt after the latter had withdrawn because of a mild heart attack. Stalin felt that:

To leave the principle of unconditional surrender unclarified merely served to unite the German people, whereas to draw up specific terms, no matter how harsh, and tell the German people that this was what they would have to accept, would in his opinion, hasten the day of German capitulation.⁴⁰

Churchill was impressed by Stalin's objection, and after returning to England, suggested to Roosevelt that they retreat from an apparently vulnerable position.⁴¹ But in spite of Stalin's opposition, Roosevelt remained firm. Churchill's speech to the House of Commons was more an expression of his loyalty to Roosevelt and an acknowledgement of the President's will than a statement of his own convictions.

³⁷ Winston S. Churchill, *The Hinge of Fate* (Boston, 1950), pp. 690–91.

³⁸ Sherwood, *op. cit.*, pp. 696, 972–74. Churchill, *op. cit.*, pp. 686–88. Churchill, in his letter to Sherwood, stated: "I heard the words 'Unconditional Surrender' for the first time from the President's lips at the Conference." It should be pointed out that "the Conference" must be construed as the Casablanca Conference and not the press conference.

³⁹ *Hull Memoirs*, Vol. 2, p. 1571.

⁴⁰ Memorandum of Marshal Stalin's Views as Expressed During the Evening of November 28, 1943, by Bohlen, *FRUS, Cairo and Teheran*, p. 513.

⁴¹ Telegram, Churchill to Roosevelt, January 2, 1944, *FRUS, Cairo and Teheran*, p. 863.

Great Britain was very conscious of the need for American help and worked skillfully to mobilize the tremendous strength of the United States in directions favorable to Great Britain. If, for instance, the United States went too far, as when Roosevelt's stand on the liberation of colonial India called into question the basic position of the British Empire, Churchill reacted angrily. But the question of unconditional surrender was less vital to Britain. Although unconditional surrender seemed to Churchill to be an unwise decision, he could yield to Roosevelt in this matter so as to make Roosevelt feel indebted to him. To have lined himself with Stalin on that issue, and thereby to have alienated Roosevelt, would have been sheer folly.

The Allies' basic political objective in Germany was the "semipermanent demilitarization of Germany." On this point even Stalin, though skeptical of the wisdom of the unconditional surrender formula, was in complete agreement:

In regard to the future treatment of Germany, Marshal Stalin developed the thesis that he had previously expressed, namely, that really effective measures to control Germany must be evolved, otherwise Germany would rise again within 15 or 20 years to plunge the world into another war.⁴²

What were these "really effective measures"? To enumerate what had been revealed on various occasions, they included, first, total disarmament, dismemberment of the German General Staff, and the punishment of the principal military leaders. They alone were insufficient, however. Second, future rearmament had to be prevented. Third, to assure the second the economic basis of rearmament had to be eradicated. Thus the need to outlaw both maintaining and manufacturing aircraft was keenly felt. The Allied leaders agreed to forbid any production of munitions in Germany. But as to whether the ban should extend to all kinds of *heavy* industry or to all types of industry, opinions were divided not only between Britain and the United States but also among the Americans themselves. One need only recall the fate of the Morgenthau Plan designed to relegate Germany to an "agricultural and pastoral country," as it advanced and retreated in the fall of 1944. The plan never gained the full support of American policymakers, let alone the British government.⁴³

⁴² *FRUS, Cairo and Teheran*, p. 553. Also see, Charles E. Bohlen, *Witness to History, 1929-1969* (New York, 1973), pp. 146-47.

⁴³ *FRUS, Quebec, 1944*, pp. 48-72, 83; *FRUS, Malta and Yalta*, p. 158. Churchill, *op.*

There was also considerable allied disagreement over the important issue of the possible partition of Germany. Roosevelt and Stalin were eager to pursue this policy and even Churchill, after his return from the Tehran conference, reluctantly conceded that the suggestion had merit. Strong opposition, however, was voiced by others in the British government and the U.S. Department of State. There was a clear division of opinion between the allied leaders and their advisors. It should be noted also that some officials were intent not only on the demilitarization but also the destruction of the economic and political foundations of the German state.⁴⁴

While the Allied leaders considered such harsh measures to obliterate the old Germany, they simultaneously attempted to devise reform measures for democratizing the nation. Whereas Stalin professed strong doubt about the possibility of Germany's being converted into a democratic society, Roosevelt was optimistic about the prospect.⁴⁵ In total war for which the entire population was mobilized and armed with both weapons and ideology, domestic and foreign affairs were believed to be inseparable. For the sake of world peace, the politics, economy, society, education, and philosophy of the aggressor nations had to be democratized. The phrase used at Casablanca in describing the aim of unconditional surrender, the "destruction of the philosophies," implied just such a need for broad domestic reform.

Hence, "unconditional surrender" became a catchword for the whole range of political objectives towards the enemy countries. But in order to achieve these objectives the protracted occupation and control of the enemy countries were essential because "unless armies of occupation do remain in many regions for a considerable period of time, the alternative will be the dangerously oversimplified solution of a mere restoration of the *status quo ante*."⁴⁶ However, the prolonged occupation and internal reform of the enemy countries would infringe upon Article 43 of the 1907 Hague Rules of Land Warfare, which stipulates that the occupiers must respect the existing laws of the occupied territories. Therefore, a memorandum within the State Department stated that:

cit., pp. 689–90; Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War* (New York, 1947), pp 568–82.

⁴⁴ *FRUS, Washington and Quebec, 1943*, p. 297; *FRUS, Cairo and Teheran*, p. 184; *FRUS, 1943*, Vol. 1, p. 542; Philip E. Mosely, "Dismemberment of Germany," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (1950), p. 489.

⁴⁵ *FRUS, Cairo and Teheran*, p. 513. *Public Papers of FDR, 1943*, pp. 557–58.

⁴⁶ A-A 20, March 5, 1942, CFR Records.

. . . unconditional surrender of a state is an innovation which requires exact definition before unusual rights can be derived incontestably from it.

It would seem essential, therefore, that the terms written into the surrender instrument, rather than conventional rights of occupation or the rights of conquest, be the source of the authority of the victors, provided there is a German Government capable of signing, and that the instrument contain a clear and comprehensive statement of that authority.⁴⁷

The paradoxical nature of unconditional surrender becomes apparent at this point. The underlying pathos of the demand for unconditional surrender was a type of unilateralism that would preclude any prior negotiation or agreement with the vanquished. But the authority of the victor to attain this kind of broad political goal could, ironically, be attained only by an agreement with the enemy country at the time of surrender. International law recognizes that the victor can absorb the enemy country by subjugation if they so desire. The Allies had no such intention and they, therefore, had to assume such authority that would transcend the limits of general international law by means of particular agreement with the vanquished.

At the time of Germany's surrender, the Allies had the choice of either presenting their concrete conditions or demanding general authority without stipulating conditions. Agreement among the Allies on basic policy towards Germany was essential to the presentation of precise terms, and Roosevelt worked hard to achieve this. Thus, upon his return from Yalta, he gave the following report to the American people:

We did, however, make it clear at the Conference just what unconditional surrender does mean for Germany.

It means the temporary control of Germany by Great Britain, Russia, France, and the United States. Each of these Nations will occupy and control a separate zone of Germany and the administration of the four zones will be coordinated in Berlin by a Control Council composed of representatives of the four Nations.

Unconditional surrender means something else. It means the end of Nazism. It means the end of the Nazi Party and of all its barbaric laws and institutions.

It means the termination of all militaristic influence in the public, private, and cultural life of Germany.

It means for the Nazi war criminals a punishment that is speedy and just—and severe.

⁴⁷ PWC 141b, "The Treatment of Germany," August 5, 1944, RG 59, N.A. *FRUS, Quebec, 1944*, p. 62.

It means the complete disarmament of Germany; the destruction of its militarism and its military equipment; the end of its production of armament; the dispersal of its armed forces; the permanent dismemberment of the German General Staff which has so often shattered the peace of the world.⁴⁸

This did not mean, however, that the political conditions were made sufficiently clear at Yalta. On the partition of Germany, for example, a considerable debate took place. Although Roosevelt did not elaborate on it, the debate produced an agreement:

[the Allies] shall possess supreme authority with respect to Germany. In the exercise of such authority they will take such steps, including the complete disarmament, demilitarization and the *dismemberment of Germany*, as they deem requisite for future peace and security.⁴⁹

However, the Allied leaders decided to relegate an examination of the details to the European Advisory Commission in London, thus avoiding making an immediate public statement.

At Yalta Roosevelt took a generally moderate position towards Germany, and when Stalin insisted on severe measures, the President stopped short of agreeing in an attempt to postpone the decision until later.

But the events in Germany were moving rapidly: while the Allies haggled and tried to postpone a decision, the military defeat of Germany and the Allies' divided occupation of the German territory were already becoming realities. These established facts inevitably became a primary factor in determining the mode of Germany's unconditional surrender. Since a unanimous decision by the Allies was not forthcoming, it was impossible to specify the victors' conditions. Even the JCS 1067 Series, the United States' basic document on the occupation of Germany, was still in the process of revision, reflecting the lack of a definite policy. For the time being, in the brief, five-article "Act of Military Surrender of May 7-8, 1945," the Allies forced Germany to promise to accept all the demands that they would make later. The fourth article stipulated that Germany had to accept "any general instrument of surrender" presented to Germany and the German military forces.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Address to the Congress Reporting on the Yalta Conference, March 1, 1945, *Public Papers of FDR, 1944-1945*, p. 570. Also see, *FRUS, Malta and Yalta*, pp. 969-71.

⁴⁹ *FRUS: Malta and Yalta*, p. 978. Italics added. Also see, *FRUS: 1944*, Vol. 1, p. 260.

⁵⁰ Department of State, *Bulletin*, July 22, 1945, pp. 106-07; Mosely, *op. cit.*, pp. 495-97; Earl F. Ziemke, *The U.S. Army in the Occupation of Germany, 1944-1946* (Washington, DC, 1975), pp. 258-60.

Unconditional surrender was forced upon Germany without presenting any conditions other than technical provisions concerning the cessation of hostilities. The Allies obtained complete freedom of action in the postwar treatment of Germany. They got their *carte blanche*—the second position explained earlier.

To a certain extent, the outcome was a fulfilment of the general intentions of Roosevelt and other leaders, but it was also a product of the Allies' failure to delineate an integrated policy towards Germany.

IV

JAPAN'S "UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER"

Studies by the State Department

The first government document in the United States concerning Japan's unconditional surrender predated the Casablanca Communiqué by eight months. It was General George V. Strong's memorandum of May 27, 1942, which had been inspired by Grayson Kirk's paper mentioned earlier. Taking his cue from the case of Germany during World War I, Strong proposed a partial occupation of the Japanese mainland and limitation of Japanese armaments. His memorandum contained such bold proposals that Hokkaido be severed from the other Japanese territories and placed under the Allied occupation, and that all the Japanese cabinet members and the first five ranking military officers be taken to Australia as hostages.

But it revealed no understanding of the political objectives of unconditional surrender, nor did it contemplate the occupation of the whole Japanese territories or the enforcement of democratic reform. Its major defect, however, was lack of basic knowledge about Japan. It, for example, equated Hokkaido, one of the least important regions in Japan, with the Rhineland in Germany, and demanded as hostages Japan's "Air Force" commanders while Japan had no separate Air Force at that time.⁵¹ These points were soon to be criticized by Japan

⁵¹ SD 18 (Security Document No. 18), "Condition of Japanese Surrender to the United States," May 27, 1942, RG 59, N.A. General Strong had been military attache at the Tokyo Embassy, and was the author of *Japanese-English Military Dictionary* (Tokyo, 1911). He was also a member of the Armaments Group of the Council on Foreign Relations in 1940.

specialists who began to staff the Special Research Division (SR) of the State Department from the summer of 1942 on.⁵²

Every year since 1923 the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) had picked up several topics and organized groups to study them; usually one of them was concerned with Far Eastern affairs. In 1941–42 a research group on the topic “Do Bases for a Real Peace Exist Between the United States and Japan?” was formed. Its chairman was George Blakeslee, a specialist in Far East international relations and professor at Clark University, while Hugh Borton, a young specialist in Japanese history and assistant professor at Columbia University, served as a rapporteur. The two scholars—one sixty-eight and the other thirty-eight years old—teamed up in the CFR first in the year when Japan and America plunged into war. What is more important, they joined the State Department together the next year and formed the core of the Far East group within the SR.⁵³

For about a year the Far East group studied the basic problems in policy planning for postwar Japan and presented a report in the fall of 1943 to the Territorial Subcommittee chaired by Isaiah Bowman, which was a subcommittee of the Advisory Committee on Postwar Foreign Policy. During the same period Country and Area Committees were set up within the State Department to deal with particular regions and make concrete postwar plans. The Inter-Divisional Area Committee on the Far East (IDACFE) was established as one of such committees.

Blakeslee and Borton were its chairman and secretary respectively. Along with such Japan hands within the State Department as Joseph Ballantine and Eugene H. Dooman, they were responsible for discussing and making plans for Japan. Of all the postwar planning during World War II staff initiatives “from below” were most richly rewarded in the area of Japan policy planning. It was mainly because there were only a few qualified Japan specialists either in academia or in the government, and they had a virtual monopoly on knowledge about Japan. In addition, similarity in their perspectives on Japan and a sense of fraternity among them also made their work effective. Under Blakeslee’s chairmanship both scholars and diplomats were remarkably free of

⁵² T 366, “Political and Economic Aspects of the Terms of Surrender for Japan,” Memo by Hugh Borton, September 27, 1943, RG 59, N.A.

⁵³ CFR Records, CFR Library, New York; This writer’s interview with Hugh Borton, November 17, 1977.

power struggle ubiquitous within government bureaucracy, enabling them to work in harmony.⁵⁴

In the summer of 1944 the Blakeslee Committee launched an intensive examination of the issue of unconditional surrender by Japan. On July 27 the Committee was presented with a draft policy paper prepared by Borton, who had been inspired by the drafted surrender terms for Germany prepared by the European Advisory Commission. On August 1 the Committee unanimously adopted the following definition: "We assume unconditional surrender for Japan to mean that Japan must accept whatever terms we may wish to impose upon it."⁵⁵ In other words, it implied "unconditional acceptance of the victor's terms." It was agreed that the terms should include political as well as military demands. On the question of whether or not specific terms were to be presented to Japan at the time of its surrender, it was felt that in Japan a different course from Germany ought to be pursued. For one thing, Japan had an Emperor. And since, unlike Germany, only a few American military officers were qualified to take control of administering Japan, the cooperation of the Japanese people was considered essential for the successful occupation of Japan.⁵⁶

On August 8, a vote was taken on the question, "Should the Japanese authorities, before accepting unconditional surrender, be given some idea of the requirements we intend to impose on Japan?" The Committee unanimously voted yes. Next a vote was taken on the method by which they should convey this to the Japanese government, but the Committee was divided six-to-four between those favoring a "written draft" and those favoring an "oral statement," such as a Presidential statement.⁵⁷ This amounted to a policy of unconditional surrender which would, unlike the "carte blanche" formula for Germany, lay down the terms prior to surrender and compel agreement by the Japanese, and it was planned at staff level fully a year before.

This approach by the Japan specialists within the Department of State paralleled advice from the field. John K. Emmerson, seeking ways to

⁵⁴ Interview with Borton, *ibid.*; Borton, *American Presurrender Planning for Postwar Japan* (New York, 1967), pp. 8, 35; Oral History Research Office, *The Reminiscences of Joseph Ballantine*, Columbia University, 1961, pp. 54-55.

⁵⁵ Minutes of Inter-Divisional Area Committee on the Far East, Meeting No. 113, August 1, 1944, p. 3; CAC 262 series, "Japan: Terms of Surrender: Underlying Principles," RG 59, N.A.

⁵⁶ Minutes of IDACFE, No. 114, August 2, 1944, p. 3; No. 117, August 8, 1944, p. 2.

⁵⁷ Minutes of IDACFE, No. 117, p. 3.

halt the apparently fanatic Japanese will to resist, carried out intensive research on the psychology of Japanese prisoners of war. In the summer of 1944 he concluded: "Should the Emperor, in his divine wisdom, order them to lay down their arms, they would of course do so in response to his stated wish. It was that simple."⁵⁸ Because only an imperial rescript could end the Japanese resistance, Emmerson proposed that the Allies should present something "more than unconditional surrender" in their announcement to the people and "offer some hope for the people of Japan in a future changed world."⁵⁹ This judgment was widely shared among American specialists in psychological warfare.

Grew's Initiative

On Saturday, May 26, 1945, Joseph C. Grew, then the Acting Secretary of State, called into his office Eugene Dooman, his subordinate and trusted associate from their prewar days at the Tokyo Embassy. Grew asked him to draw up a draft statement advising Japan of the United States' surrender terms and to have it ready by Monday morning.⁶⁰ Dooman was receptive to the idea given the fact that the surrender policy for Japan had been carefully worked out by the group of Japan specialists mentioned above. But Dooman was unconvinced about the timing and asked why it was to be done at that particular time. Judging from the actions of Japan following Germany's surrender, he had discerned no conspicuous moves on the part of Japan. In reply, Grew mentioned the news of Tokyo air raids which had just come in, and simply asserted, "We can't waste any more time."⁶¹

One probable explanation for the timing of Grew's decision was the formation on April 7 of a new cabinet headed by Kantaro Suzuki. Grew vividly remembered the February 26 Incident (1936), in which Admiral Suzuki had been attacked by a group of radical young officers because of the moderate liberal stand he took in advising the Emperor.⁶² The fact

⁵⁸ John K. Emmerson, *The Japanese Thread; A Life in the U.S. Foreign Service* (New York, 1978), p. 175.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

⁶⁰ Oral History Research Office, *Interview with Eugene H. Dooman*, Columbia University, 1962, p. 161; Manuscript, *Memoir of Eugene H. Dooman; American Foreign Service, 1912-1945* (1968), in the possession of the Columbia Oral History Research Office, p. 13.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Joseph C. Grew, *Turbulent Era; A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years, 1904-1945* (London, 1953), pp. 987-89.

that Suzuki was now Prime Minister might well have caused Grew to anticipate the possibility that Japanese politics would shift in a more desirable direction.

On May 3, however, after having been asked to comment on a draft statement for Japan by Elmer Davis, Director of the Office of War Information, Grew had flatly rejected it. A direct appeal to the Japanese people, said Grew, held the risk of impairing American prestige in Asia.⁶³ Why did Grew make virtually the same proposal less than a month later? Certainly the Tokyo air raids were one factor, but the air raid of May 25 (May 24, U.S. time) was not on the same large scale as those of March 9, and damaged only the upper class residences of the Yamanote section (where many of Grew's old friends lived). Except that the fire spread to the Imperial Palace, there were no new elements.

This writer believes that one cannot persuasively explain Grew's behavior unless "S-1," i.e., the atomic bomb, is taken into account. Although Grew, as requested by the informant, maintained complete silence concerning his prior knowledge of the bomb throughout the rest of his career, and even in his memoirs written late in his life, it is now clear that Grew had been informed of "S-1" by Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson. At 11:00 A.M. on Tuesday, May 8 (V-E Day), the Committee of Three—Secretaries Grew, Stimson, and Forrestal—met. Stimson recorded in his diary:

After the normal business was over, however, I shoed out everybody except Forrestal and Grew and told them of the Interim Committee for S-1 that I am forming and what its purposes were . . . and we had a little short discussion about the function of the Committee.⁶⁴

Grew's silence concerning the atomic bomb cannot correctly be interpreted as indicating lack of concern. On the contrary, during his "Ten Years in Japan" he had developed a real affection for the country and had many close friends there. For Grew the possibility that the atomic bomb might be used was probably far too disturbing to be mentioned. The image of Tokyo in flames, destroyed by air raids,

⁶³ Memorandum by Grew for William Leahy, May 3, 1945, Grew Papers, Harvard University.

⁶⁴ Diaries of Henry L. Stimson, May 8, 1945, Stimson Papers, Yale University; Walter Millis, ed., *The Forrestal Diaries* (New York, 1951), p. 54. Further, Dooman stated that he learned later that Grew had been told about the atom bomb. Dooman Interview, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

probably appeared to him as a hellish preview of the holocaust this revolutionary weapon would bring. Three and one-half years earlier, Grew had been interned in the Tokyo Embassy after the Pearl Harbor attack. At that time the following exchange of letters took place between himself and Shigeru Yoshida, who would play a central role in the postwar reconstruction of Japan.

(Yoshida to Grew) I well remember how you always tell me that to promote the friendship of our two countries is your life work. . . . It is a very sad thing that even your unfatigued efforts could not save the peace. But you can rest assured that we will never forget your friendship to our country and to us.⁶⁵

(Grew to Yoshida) My reaction to this whole tragic situation cannot be expressed in words; it is far too acute. Let us leave it to the expression in one of your recent letters to me, when things were already—although I did not know it then—moving toward their fatal climax. You wrote: “You know how I feel, and I may understand your feelings.” With that mutual understanding, there is nothing more to be said.⁶⁶

If these liberals close to the Emperor—including Yoshida—to whom Grew would willingly entrust Japan’s surrender and reconstruction, were killed in the bombings, what would happen? He considered the restoration of peace in the Pacific to be the last task in his public career. Moreover, that effort would be made with a view to rebuilding a new Japan on a sound foundation and reintegrating it securely in the family of nations. Once Japan had been reduced to complete ruin, it would be too late to begin, and so Grew decided, “we can’t waste any more time.”

Fortunately, Grew had moved into the important post of Undersecretary of State at the end of 1944. By early 1945, since Secretary of State Edward R. Stettinius, Jr. had meager experience in foreign affairs and was frequently absent from Washington, Grew was in fact the highest authority in the Department. When Harry S. Truman took office on April 12, due to the sudden death of Roosevelt, he had to make up for his lack of experience in foreign affairs by relying heavily on the information and advice provided by the State Department. Grew happened to be virtually the highest-ranking official in the Department when it was regaining control of the nation’s conduct in foreign affairs.

⁶⁵ Yoshida to Mr. and Mrs. Grew, December 17, 1941, Grew Papers.

⁶⁶ Grew to Yoshida, January 1, 1942, Grew Papers.

A Shift: Spring 1945

Grew was further emboldened by three other developments within the American government. First was the position of the new President on “unconditional surrender.” His April 16 speech to Congress—his first as President—received the loudest applause when he made the statement: “Our demand has been—and it remains—unconditional surrender!”⁶⁷ The same words “unconditional surrender” were repeated by the President in his statement about three weeks later—on the day of Germany’s surrender.

This time, however, a subtle change could be noticed by a keen observer: Truman carefully limited “unconditional surrender” to mean a “military goal.” Unobtrusively, he shifted the position of the American government from unconditional surrender of the nation to that of the entire military. While reiterating that “Our blows will not cease until the Japanese military and naval forces lay down their arms in *unconditional surrender*,” he held that, “It means not prolonging the present agony and suffering of the Japanese in the vain hope of victory. Unconditional surrender does not mean the extermination or enslavement of the Japanese people,” and he suggested that the Japanese people need not despair of the future.⁶⁸ This evoked no response from the Japanese government, but it left a strong impression on Grew and encouraged him to urge the President to issue a clearer statement to Japan.⁶⁹

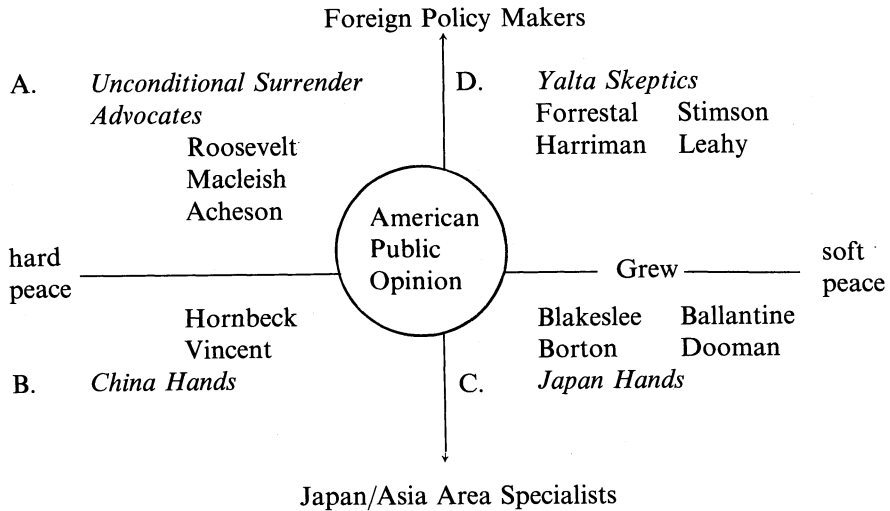
Second was the fact that the State Department was moving towards a reexamination of Roosevelt’s policy of cooperation with the Soviet Union. The “vertical principle” of promoting “cooperation of the major powers” at the top and demanding “unconditional surrender of the enemy powers” at the other end of the scale, the basic framework of America’s wartime foreign policy, appeared to have been strengthened at the Yalta Conference. After Yalta, however, American-Soviet relations grew increasingly strained over Poland and other issues, and the position of Stettinius, Grew, and the European specialists was moving towards support for Ambassador Harriman’s hard-line stance. At Roosevelt’s death this change in attitude began to surface clearly. A

⁶⁷ *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman, 1945*. (Washington, 1961), pp. 43–48, 50. Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman: Year of Decisions* (Garden City, N.Y., 1955), p. 42. Robert J. Donovan, *Conflict and Crisis: The Presidency of Harry S. Truman, 1945–1948* (New York, 1977), pp. 18–19.

⁶⁸ Department of State, *Bulletin*, May 13, 1945, p. 886.

⁶⁹ Grew, *op. cit.*, p. 1422.

LINEUP OF AMERICAN LEADERSHIP ON JAPAN POLICY (SPRING 1945)



State Department report issued the day after Truman’s inauguration asserted: “Since the Yalta conference the Soviet Government has taken a firm and uncompromising position on nearly every major question that has arisen in our relations.”⁷⁰ Thus it became possible to present a plan for dealing with Japan on the basis of a different framework from that of the Roosevelt era.

Third, the Committee of Three had become a powerful source of support for Grew. Unlike his predecessor, Truman disliked personal diplomacy, preferring a style of decision-making that rested on the consultation and cooperation of the responsible officials. This being the case, it was natural that the Departments of State, War, and the Navy should form the core of wartime foreign policy-making, and through the Committee of Three Grew was able to broaden his influence within the entire Truman Administration. Stimson expressed understanding and support for Grew’s views on Japan, and Forrestal challenged the “vertical principle” with his anti-Soviet stance. Although ultimately it did not bear fruit, the discussion held in mid-May by these three and Harriman of a revision of the secret Yalta agreement with regard to the Far East was an important move.⁷¹

⁷⁰ State Department Memo, “Special Information for the President,” April 13, 1945. Truman, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

Of the positions indicated in the above chart, "A" and "B" were dominant during the war. "C" was merely a minority group of specialists, but by spring 1945, as the influence of "D" at the top increased, "C" and "D" were linked with Grew. So far "D" had been neutral and indifferent to Japanese affairs, but it gradually came to embrace the views of "C." The implementation of the plan developed by the small group of the Japan specialists was the result of these changes.

The Atomic Bomb and the Potsdam Declaration

Early on the morning of Monday, May 28, Grew received a draft from Dooman, went to the President's room at 12:35, and gave a lengthy lecture to Truman. He insisted that only a guarantee to the Japanese people that they would be free to determine their own political system, including the imperial institution, would make possible Japan's early surrender and reduce the sacrifice of American lives. Truman patiently listened to the old diplomat and "said that he was interested in what I [Grew] said because his own thoughts had been following the same line." With regard to Grew's request that he add a statement on Japan to his presidential speech scheduled for Memorial Day, however, he reserved the decision until he could learn the opinions of the military leaders.⁷² The next morning Grew went with Dooman, Elmer Davis, and Judge Samuel Rosenman to the Pentagon and tried to persuade Stimson, Forrestal, Marshall and other admirals and generals of the necessity of such a statement. He found that ". . . all [were] in accord with the principle but for certain military reasons not divulged, it was considered inadvisable for the president to make such a statement just now."⁷³

With regard to "certain military reasons," Dooman returned to the State Department with the conjecture that they were related to the Army's determination to stick to their plan to invade the Japanese mainland. When he said as much, Grew merely "agreed that it was a pity."⁷⁴ In his memoirs Grew himself did not comment on these reasons,

⁷¹ Stimson Diaries, May 13, 1945, Stimson Papers. *Forrestal Diaries*, pp. 52-53, 56-57. Grew Memo for Stimson and Forrestal on Yalta, May 12, 1945, and Grew Memo of Conversation with Stettinius by Telephone, May 12, 1945, Grew Papers.

⁷² Grew Memo of Conversation with the President, May 28, 1945, Grew Papers; *FRUS, 1945*, Vol. 6, pp. 545-47.

⁷³ Grew Memo of Conversation at Stimson's Office, May 29, 1945, Grew Papers; *FRUS, 1945*, Vol. 6, p. 548.

⁷⁴ Dooman Interview, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

but suggested a connection with the fact that Okinawa operations were still underway.⁷⁵ In the meantime Grew had by no means forgotten the atomic bomb. Stimson recorded that “military reasons” meant the atom bomb: “It was an awkward meeting because there were people present in the presence of whom I could not discuss the real feature which would govern the whole situation, namely, S-1.”⁷⁶ Stimson constantly asked himself the question: how to make use of the vast power that the “S-1” possessed—for the purpose of defeating Japan as well as, more indirectly, for the purpose of strengthening America’s position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. Grew also was aware that the bomb would shortly be ready for use, but his concern was to find a way to avoid its use in Japan.

The question of timing aside, both Stimson and Marshall “agreed with giving the Japanese a modification of the unconditional surrender formula.”⁷⁷ In the end support for this basic position by all top officials except Davis was crucial in laying the groundwork for the Potsdam Declaration.⁷⁸

A White House conference on June 18 approved preparations for the landing operation on the Japanese mainland (Olympic), with November 1 as the target date. Earlier it had been Grew who had worked feverishly for an early end to the war, but this time it was Stimson who, given the time limit for the landing operation, grew increasingly impatient in seeking an early surrender because the invasion would inevitably increase the number of casualties. Stimson thought it possible to avoid the landing operation by combining the statement to Japan with the atomic bomb. Thus, in late June drafting was begun under the supervision of the Committee of Three. The draft was to become—after several revisions—a joint statement to Japan by the Allied Powers. On July 2 Stimson handed it to the President in the form of a memorandum.⁷⁹

Article 12 of this original draft contained specific permission for a “constitutional monarchy under the present dynasty;” but opposition of Assistant Secretaries Dean Acheson and Archibald Macleish, former Secretary of State Hull, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff caused James F. Byrnes, the new Secretary of State, to delete that part.⁸⁰ But the goal

⁷⁵ Grew, *op. cit.*, pp. 1435–36.

⁷⁶ Stimson Diaries, May 29, 1945, Stimson Papers.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*; *Forrestal Diaries*, p. 66.

⁷⁸ Although in the official document the word “Proclamation” was used, this writer went along with the more popularly used word “Declaration.”

⁷⁹ *FRUS, Potsdam*, Vol. 1, pp. 893–94.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 895–96, 900–01, Vol. 2, pp. 1267–69.

remained the same: to indicate the precise terms to Japan, "without abandoning our formula of 'unconditional surrender,'" and to convey "our intention to permit them to retain their political institutions."⁸¹ The Potsdam Declaration was issued on July 26 in the names of the United States, the Republic of China, and Great Britain. It demanded only the "unconditional surrender of all Japanese armed forces," and after enumerating the political conditions to be imposed on Japan, it suggested that the Japanese government would remain intact even under occupation. The formula for Germany prescribed unconditional surrender of the nation itself and resulted in a direct military administration by the Allies, and partition into four occupation zones. Germany unconditionally surrendered in the sense that it was given literally no conditions. Insofar as Japan accepted specified conditions set down in the Potsdam Declaration, its surrender was definitely conditional.

It should be noted, however, that the definition which prevailed under the Roosevelt administration was "unconditional acceptance of the victor's terms"; this covered both "carte blanche" demand for surrender, as was applied to Germany, and surrender after "presentation of terms," as in the Japanese case. It is dangerous to speculate, but if Roosevelt had lived, he would probably have demanded "unconditional surrender of Japan as a nation," but out of actual necessity, he probably would not have rejected the "statement of surrender terms." "Unconditional surrender" therefore probably would have been publicized as "unconditional acceptance of the victor's terms." One may well envision the inevitable press conference, in which Roosevelt foists on startled reporters the Scholastic rationalization that "unconditional surrender does not necessarily imply that conditions must be precluded."

Truman did not attempt to abandon the catchword "unconditional surrender," although it had been criticized as "too tough and too rough." However, by adding inconspicuously in the heading, "Our Military Goal," he glossed over the inconsistency with the actual policy. Vastly relieved, Grew, Stimson, and the British government moderated the policy even further. They brought about a surrender of Japan with specified terms as well as the unconditional surrender of all the armed forces of Japan.

The Potsdam Declaration meant substantial relaxation of surrender terms for Japan. "United States Initial Post-Defeat Policy Relating to

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 884.

Japan" (SWNCC 150), drafted in the State Department, discussed in the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC), and adopted with modifications on June 11, 1945, had intended to suspend the constitutional authority of the Emperor at the beginning of the occupation and to let the supreme command of the occupation forces take over all the powers of the Japanese government.⁸² The Potsdam Declaration drastically changed the policy plan which had been developed from initiative on the staff level, and opened the way to the indirect rule of Japan through the machinery of the existing Japanese government including the Emperor. Such an indirect rule was the policy the Japan specialists in the State Department had favored from the beginning. However, they had been forced to retreat to the line of "SWNCC 150" in the process of bargaining with their opponents in the State Department and other governmental agencies. They were saved from this retreat by the intervention of the three Secretaries —State, War and Navy— who regained their power under President Truman. The Committee of Three acted quickly in response to the deterioration of post-Yalta American-Soviet relations. Besides, one of the Three, Joseph C. Grew, was the head of the "Japan Hands." It is very important that Acting Secretary of State Grew served as the link to connect the Japan specialists in the lower level of officialdom with the top decision makers dealing with global policy. The "vertical principle," the basic framework for America's wartime diplomacy, had as its major components such policies as cooperation with the Soviet Union, the elevation of China to a great power, and the semipermanent reduction of Germany and Japan to impotence. During the last three months of World War II, the Committee of Three was in search of a modification of this framework. The change was reflected in the policy to force Japan's defeat, and, as a result, the Potsdam Declaration came into being.

⁸² SWNCC 150, "United States Initial Post-Defeat Policy Relating to Japan," June 11, 1945, RG 353, N.A.